

The first three topics (the two truths, the four noble truths, and the three objects of refuge) are from the point of view of practice itself; the next three topics (the three types of diligence) are from the point of view of avoiding the manifestation of negativities in the continua of practitioners; the following two topics (the five kinds of vision and the six types of clairvoyance) are from the point of view of increasing the practitioners' qualities, and the last two topics (the path of seeing and the path of meditation) are from the point of view of permanently eliminating negativities in the continua of practitioners.

## **THE TWO TRUTHS**

The nature and the aspect of Mahayana practice were explained by way of expounding on the two truths (*during the IBD philosophy course in the spring of 2011*).

## **THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**

The focal object of Mahayana practice was explained by way of expounding on the four noble truths (*during the IBD philosophy course in the autumn of 2011*).

Following that is the explanation of the three objects of refuge:

## **THE THREE OBJECTS OF REFUGE**

Some masters say (though this debatable) that practitioners who have listened, contemplated, and meditated on the four noble truths, and have attained a deep understanding of those truths, do not have to listen to and contemplate the teachings on the three objects of refuge anymore since they naturally take refuge in the three Jewels, i.e. the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. However, for those who need to deepen their contemplation of the four truths, Maitreya presents the next topic: the three objects of refuge.

The three objects of refuge, or three Jewels, are:

- 1) The Buddha Jewel
- 2) The Dharma Jewel
- 3) The Sangha Jewel

### *1) The Buddha Jewel*

The Buddha Jewel refers to fully enlightened beings, who are endowed with the four bodies (the Dharmakaya, Svabhavakaya, Samboghakaya, and the Nimanakaya).

### *2) The Dharma Jewel*

Regarding the Dharma Jewel, there are different interpretations as to what it refers to.

According to Maitreya's ***Uttaratantra (Sublime Continuum)***, in a stricter sense the Dharma refers to Arya paths (truths of the path) and cessations (truths of cessation) in the continua of beings who have attained any of the three Arya paths, i.e. the path of seeing, the path of meditation, or the path of no more learning.

However, in a wider sense, the Dharma Jewel is also explained to refer to the teachings of the Buddha.

### *3) The Sangha Jewel*

Similar to the Dharma Jewel, there are different interpretations as to what the Sangha Jewel refers to. According to the ***Uttaratantra (Sublime Continuum)***, the Sangha Jewel refers in a stricter sense to Aryas, i.e. to Hearer, Solitary Realizers, and Bodhisattvas who have reached the path of seeing, the path of meditation, or the path of no more learning.

According to the Vinaya scriptures, the Hinayana sutras, and some Mahayana sutras, the Sangha Jewel refers to the community of ordained monks and nuns, or in an even wider sense, to the community of spiritual trainees who have dedicated their lives to Buddhist practice.

The three Jewels can be further categorized into:

1. The causal three Jewels
2. The resultant three Jewels

The *resultant* three Jewels are one's future Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Thus, the resultant Buddha Jewel refers to one's future Buddha, the resultant Dharma Jewel refers to one's future Arya paths and Arya cessations, and the resultant Sangha Jewel refers to one's future Arya being.

Taking refuge in the resultant Jewels does not mean to entrust and rely on them, but rather to aspire and strive towards attaining these three.

The *causal* three Jewels refer to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha that exist in the present and assist practitioners in their endeavor to attain the resultant three Jewels.

Taking refuge in the causal three Jewels means to entrust and rely on them.

Taking refuge in the (causal and resultant) three Jewels constitutes the gateway to Buddhist practice; it is the gateway to entering deeply into the teachings by the Buddha. However, it is not only important initially but at all stages of one's spiritual development, since without taking refuge one is unable to progress on the path.

### **THE CAUSES FOR TAKING REFUGE**

There are various different causes for going for refuge. In general, these causes are categorized into two:

1. Fear
2. Faith

However, these two differ in relation to practitioners' different aspirations, for there are various goals of Buddhist practice that practitioners strive to achieve. Therefore, the different types of goals as well as the different types of fear and faith are presented in the context of explaining the three types of persons:

### **The three types of persons**

The main results of Buddhist practice are twofold:

- 1) Temporary results
- 2) Definite or lasting results

Hence there are two types of goals:

- 1) Temporary goals
- 2) Definite or lasting goals

The first refer to rebirths in the higher *Samsaric* realms (human, semi-celestial, or celestial realm). These are merely temporary because one can fall down from these states and take rebirth in the lower realms.

The lasting or definite goals are again twofold:

1. Self-liberation (or *mere* liberation)
2. Buddhahood

These two states are definite or lasting because once obtained they do not degenerate.

Therefore, in total there are three goals of Buddhist practice:

1. Rebirths in any of the higher *Samsaric* realms
2. Self-liberation
3. Buddhahood

Practitioners that aspire to attain one of the three types of goals are also threefold:

1. Persons of small spiritual scope (they primarily aspire to take rebirths in any of the higher *Samsaric* realms)
2. Persons of intermediate spiritual scope (they primarily aspire to attain self-liberation)
3. Persons of great spiritual scope (they primarily aspire to attain Buddhahood)

